

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 456 929

PS 029 782

TITLE Head Start: A Comprehensive Child Development Program for Children Birth to Age Five.

INSTITUTION Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC. Child Care Bureau.

PUB DATE 2001-00-00

NOTE 18p.

AVAILABLE FROM For full text: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/>.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Early Intervention; Low Income; Pamphlets; Parent Materials; *Preschool Children; *Preschool Education; Program Descriptions

IDENTIFIERS *Project Head Start

ABSTRACT

This pamphlet describes Head Start, a comprehensive program designed to foster the healthy development of young children from low-income families. Based on the view that Head Start helps to build a foundation for children's success, the pamphlet describes the population served by the program, the support received by local communities, its expansion to serve infants and toddlers, the establishment of high standards, the program's active support of high-quality services, and the measurement of outcomes for children. The Head Start philosophy is described as reflected in the array of services provided to children and families: education and early childhood development, child health and development, and family and community partnerships. The role of Head Start in improving child development services and focusing national attention on the importance of early childhood development is highlighted. The pamphlet also emphasizes the role of volunteers in the success of Head Start. Concluding the pamphlet is a list of Head Start regional offices. (KB)

Head Start: A Comprehensive Child Development Program for Children Birth to Age Five

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HEAD START:



**A Comprehensive
Child Development
Program
for Children
Birth to Age Five**



HEAD START has served more than 17 million children and their families since it began in 1965.



HEAD START Helps to Build a Foundation for Children's Success.

Head Start is a comprehensive program designed to foster the healthy development of young children from low-income families. The program has grown from a brief, eight-week summer program for preschoolers in 1965 to a year-round program today, serving children from birth to age five and pregnant women. Head Start provides children from low-income families with daily nutritious meals and many opportunities for social, emotional, and intellectual growth that can prepare them for success in school and in life. The program also connects children to a health care source and provides vital support services to their families.

HEAD START includes children with diverse backgrounds and needs. Each year, over 800,000 children from low-income families attend Head Start classrooms or receive Head Start services in their homes. They include infants and toddlers, children of migrant farm workers, and American Indian families, as well as children with disabilities.



HEAD START draws on the support of local communities. Head Start programs are operated by over 1,400 community-based organizations. Grantees include school districts, universities, community health centers, tribal governments, Alaska Native Corporation, city and county governments, Community Action Agencies, and other profit and nonprofit organizations. The U.S. government provides 80% of Head Start program funding through the Department of Health and Human Services. The remaining 20% must come from community sources. This requirement helps to ensure that each Head Start program reflects the strengths, needs, concerns, and cultures of the local community.

HEAD START has expanded to serve infants and toddlers. Early Head Start, a program for infants and toddlers, was initiated in response to the changing needs of low-income families and to research indicating how critical the period from birth to age three is to a child's healthy growth and development. Beginning in 1995, sixty-eight Early Head Start programs

were funded to serve more than 5,000 pregnant women and families with children under age three. In subsequent years, Early Head Start has more than doubled in size and now serves families in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.



HEAD START ensures that children with disabilities get much-needed care.

Head Start has set high standards. Head Start has established comprehensive standards for program design and operation and strictly enforces them with on-site monitoring to ensure that all Head Start children and their families receive the highest-quality service. The standards reflect the latest research on the best methods for working with young children and their families. The Head Start Program Performance Standards were developed by a diverse team of child development and health experts, teachers, and program staff, with input from community partners. The Head Start Program Performance Standards provide valuable direction on virtually every aspect of Head Start services.

Head Start actively supports high-quality services. Head Start maintains a nationwide training network to assist local program staff. The regional network engages experts from a wide variety of fields, who are available to train, guide and support the Head Start programs. The network also provides an information channel to help each Head Start program stay abreast of successful practices as well as the latest research and technology.

To support delivery of high-quality services, all Head Start programs are required to maintain effective and efficient management systems and to recruit and hire staff who meet qualifications specified in the Head Start regulations. In addition, Head Start staff receive on-going training and professional development to enhance their skills.

Head Start measures its outcomes for children. Head Start four-year-olds perform above the levels expected for children from low-income families who have not attended center-based programs. They develop a sense of structure and are better prepared for elementary school. Head Start research is pioneering methods to evaluate these and other benefits to ensure that Head Start programs continue to be accountable to the families they serve and to the

der community.

All children are given a chance to express themselves through art, music, and storytelling.



The HEAD START Philosophy is Reflected in the Array of Services Provided to Children and Families.

The Primary Service Areas are:

- 1) Education and Early Childhood Development**
- 2) Child Health and Development**
- 3) Family and Community Partnerships**

1 *Education and Early Childhood Development* - All Head Start services are customized to the individual child's developmental level (including children with disabilities) and consider each child's temperament, interests, and learning style. Head Start programs also respect the culture, language, and family of each child.

Head Start provides children with a variety of learning experiences. Head Start offers many opportunities for children to express themselves through art, music, movement, and storytelling. Children participate in indoor and outdoor play, and learn about books, words, numbers, and the world around them. Children are encouraged to communicate their ideas and feelings and to develop self-confidence and the ability to along with others. Head Start programs also



***EARLY HEAD START
enhances the lives of
infants and toddlers in the
critical early stages
of development.***

work with the children and parents to help them make a successful transition to kindergarten or elementary school.

Infants, toddlers, and pregnant women receive specialized care in Early Head Start. Early Head Start programs provide services developed specifically for infants and toddlers from birth to age three and pregnant women. Early Head Start staff have special training to enable them to create an environment where infants and toddlers can flourish and develop important skills such as self-awareness, independence, and self-expression.

Head Start helps foster secure relationships between children and well-trained staff. Head Start's policy of having one trained teacher for each group of four children or infants helps programs create secure relationships between children and staff. This gives Head Start children and infants the sense of trust and emotional security they need to explore their environment and develop new skills.

Head Start extends services to children and parents in the home. Head Start staff make home visits, especially to the homes of parents with newborns and older infants, to help strengthen parenting skills and to hear and respond to parental concerns.

Head Start responds to children with disabilities. Special training is provided to Head Start staff to help them work with children with disabilities. More than 10% of Head Start, and Early Head Start children have special needs, and these children are included in all program activities. Head Start staff also work closely with community agencies and other programs for young children with disabilities to ensure that children with special needs obtain the care they need.

2 *Child Health and Development-* Head Start programs focus on each child's basic health needs as well as the healthy behaviors and practices that can prevent illness and enhance a child's life-long well-being.

Head Start children receive medical and dental care. Head Start recognizes the importance of identifying and addressing health problems early in a child's life so that they do not interfere with a child's learning and development. The program arranges comprehensive health care for every child. This includes a complete health examination with a screening for chronic or disabling conditions, a vision and hearing test, a dental checkup, and immunizations. Follow-ups are scheduled for children with any in-

dication of problems. Early Head Start programs provide crucial prenatal care for pregnant women as well



All children enrolled in HEAD START receive a complete health screening, immunizations, and a dental checkup.



as training in the care of infants for mothers of newborns. These and other Early Head Start services, such as nutrition counseling, medical and dental examinations, and mental health services, continue long after delivery.

*Each day,
HEAD START
children receive
a nutritious
meal and snack.*

Head Start has strict standards for safety and hygiene. Staff at Head Start programs are trained in CPR and other first-aid techniques. In addition, all programs are required to have procedures in place to prevent injuries and to respond to emergencies. Further, all programs must comply with strict guidelines for toy safety and cleanliness.

Head Start provides nourishing meals and promotes breast-feeding. In most programs, children are served one hot meal and a nutritious snack each day. A trained nutritionist in each program helps ensure that all Head Start meals are balanced and that the foods are culturally appropriate for the local community and reflect the needs of the families. In Early Head Start, careful provisions are made to meet the nutritional needs of infants.

Head Start promotes mental health. Head Start staff work hard to promote the mental health of each child and family. Head Start staff have access to a mental health professional to help them identify children's mental health needs so that treatment referrals can be made if services necessary.

3 *Family and Community Partnerships* — Head Start staff approach work with a family as a team effort, from the beginning process of setting goals to making policy and program decisions. Head Start programs also actively collaborate with community agencies and organizations to establish a network of support that families can draw on during and after Head Start.

Parents are encouraged to become involved in every aspect of Head Start. Parents and family members work in partnership with Head Start staff to set goals for their child's and family's development. An individualized plan is designed to assist them in achieving their family goals. Parents are encouraged to share their ideas and opinions, to visit the programs, and to participate in Parent Committee and other group activities. Parents can attend classes and workshops to learn about parenting, nutrition, safety practices, preparing for jobs, and many other topics. Parents also have an important voice in program decision-making by serving as elected members of their Head Start program's Policy Council. Head Start programs can help parents obtain educational, literacy, or job training. They also may offer parents opportunities for employment. Many parents serve as volunteers or as aides to Head Start teachers and staff. Some are cooks, storytellers, or play supervisors. When parents are qualified for

Head Start jobs, they may receive preference in hiring. (Thirty percent of Head Start staff are parents of current or former



Thirty percent of HEAD START staff are former or current HEAD START parents.

Head Start children.) Staff also help parents find employment in other fields.

HEAD START is an active partner with the community. Head Start programs take an active role in their communities and collaborate with many other organizations to enable Head Start children and families to receive services that are beyond the scope of Head Start. Head Start community partners include health and mental health providers, agencies that provide services to children with disabilities, child protective services, child care organizations, local schools, businesses, and other service groups. Community partnerships enable Head Start staff to refer parents to many community resources that are available to assist them in achieving their family goals.

HEAD START has Led the Way in Improving Child Development Services.

Head Start has played a major role in focusing the attention of the nation on the importance of early childhood development. The program has had a dramatic impact on the delivery of child development and child care services and on the expansion of community activities for young children.

In addition to improving the lives of children, Head Start has had a positive impact on parents and families. Many parents have earned the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and have been hired as Head Start staff or have found employment in other early childhood settings.

HEAD START continues to respond to the needs of low-income families. Today, Head Start is reaching out even more to serve the needs of young children from low-income families. Through Early Head Start, programs have expanded to include services for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. To help programs run more efficiently and effectively, Head Start has implemented additional management controls and new training programs. Many Head Start programs are working with agencies and child care organizations in their communities to find ways to deliver full-day and full-year Head Start quality services to children of low-income parents who are working or in job training. Head Start is also continuing to build vital partnerships with a variety of community organizations to help strengthen families and fulfill family needs that are beyond Head Start's capabilities alone. Head Start community partnerships ensure that the benefits to the child and family continue far beyond Head Start.



HEAD START has become recognized as a leader in providing services to children with disabilities, children of migrant farm workers, and American Indian families.



HEAD START
relies on people
like you. To con-
tinue to succeed, Head
Start needs people of
all backgrounds, train-
ing, and ages. High
school and college stu-
dents, senior citizens,
business people, par-
ents, and community

leaders can assist in many ways, from helping out
in the classroom and training other volunteers to
renovating buildings and playgrounds.

Community organizations also play a vital part in
the success of Head Start. Programs rely on part-
nerships with community organizations to provide
many specialized services such as medical and
dental examinations or educational materials.

Contact the Head Start program
near you. There are over 18,000 Head Start
sites in the United States, so there is probably a
Head Start program near you. For more informa-
tion or to locate the Head Start programs in your
community, contact the Head Start Specialist for
your state under the following listing of Head Start
Regional Offices. Or visit our web site at: [http://
www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/).

Volunteers
help in the
classroom and
on field trips,
renovate centers,
and support
parent education.

HEAD START

Regional Offices

Head Start Specialist - Region I **Administration for Children and Families**

Department of Health and Human Services
Government Center

JFK Federal Building, Room 2000

Boston, Massachusetts 02203

Phone: 617/565-2482

*Serving: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts,
New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont*

Head Start Specialist - Region II **Administration for Children and Families**

Department of Health and Human Services
Federal Building, Room 4114, 41st Floor

26 Federal Plaza

New York, New York 10278

212/264-2974

*Serving: New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico,
Virgin Islands*

Head Start Specialist - Region III **Administration for Children and Families**

Department of Health and Human Services
150 South Independence Mall West, Suite 864

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

215/861-4000

*Serving: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland,
Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia*

Head Start Specialist - Region IV **Administration for Children and Families**

Department of Health and Human Services
61 Forsyth Street, SW, Suite M60

Atlanta, Georgia 30303

404/562-2833

*Serving: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky,
Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee*

Head Start Specialist - Region V
Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
233 North Michigan, 4th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60603
312/353-8322

*Serving: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota,
Ohio, Wisconsin*

Head Start Specialist - Region VI
Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
1301 Young Street, Suite 937
Dallas, Texas 75202
214/767-2981

*Serving: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico,
Oklahoma, Texas*

Head Start Specialist - Region VII
Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
Federal Building, Room 276
601 East 12th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64106
816/426-5401

Serving: Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska

Head Start Specialist - Region VIII
Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
1961 Stout Street, Room 1185
Denver, Colorado 80294
303/844-3106

*Serving: Colorado, Montana, North Dakota,
South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming*

Head Start Specialist - Region IX
Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
50 United Nations Plaza, Room 450
San Francisco, California 94104
415/437-8481

*Serving: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada,
Pacific Insular Areas*

Head Start Specialist - Region X
Administration for Children and Families

Department of Health and Human Services
Blanchard Plaza
2201 Sixth Avenue, Suite 600
Seattle, Washington 98121
206/615-2557

Serving: Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington

American Indian Programs Branch
Head Start Bureau

Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20447
202/205-8437

Migrant Programs Branch
Head Start Bureau

Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20447
202/205-8455



Please visit our web site at:
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/>

You'll find a wealth of resources
on HEAD START.



**Join hands
with HEAD START.**



Visit the Head Start Bureau web site at:
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/>



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Administration for Children and Families
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Head Start Bureau



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Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



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EFF-089 (3/2000)